

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method for forming a mask, comprising the steps of:

creating at least one drawing layer that defines changes to the structures to be formed on the surface of a semiconductor substrate at one step in the processing thereof, which step involves the use of a mask, wherein the at least one drawing layer will define a pattern region that will either result in removal of the material from the semiconductor substrate in the defined pattern region, or removal of matter from the semiconductor substrate around the defined pattern region;

creating in the at least one drawing layer an indicator area with an indicator region disposed therein that will result in removal of material from around the indicator region regardless of whether the mask is a dark tone mask or a clear tone mask, the indicator region appearing in the negative if the mask is a dark tone mask; and

creating a mask from the at least one drawing layer as either a dark tone mask having a transparent region corresponding to the defined pattern region for exposing the underlying substrate if the defined pattern region is associated with a process that results in material being removed from around the defined pattern region, or as a clear tone mask having an occluding region corresponding to the defined pattern region if the defined pattern region is associated with a process that results in material being removed from the defined pattern region.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of creating at least one drawing layer comprises creating at least a plurality of drawing layers and wherein the step of creating the mask comprises combining the drawing layers.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the indicator region includes identification for identifying the mask apart from other masks.